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ABSTRACT

The research reported in this document was designed to discover whether the Japanese consider themselves apprehensive in communication situations. Seven hundred Japanese college students and 700 United States students took the Personal Report of Communication Apprehention (PRCA) test, which focuses on feelings about communicating with others on a one-to-one basis, in small groups, and before audiences. Results showed that the Japanese students were more apprehensive than the United States students in all three types of speaking situations. Because the PRCA was conceived and developed in the United States, however, its results for other cultural populations may not be reliable. Five distirctions between Japanese and United States culture may account for the apparently high apprehension level among the Japanese students: a group versus individualistic orientation, aesthetic versus cognitive style of communicating, nonpersuasive versus persuasive talk, insistence on total understanding versus flexibility, and indirect versus direct talk. This research and the five cross-cultural distinctions can help United States and Japanese people understand each other's different styles during interaction. (CC)

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COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION OF JAPANESE AND AMERICANS IN THREE SPEAKING SITUATIONS

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Studies of Japanese speaking habits suggest a people who are shy, uncomfortable, and self-conscious in oral communication situations. Yoshikawa (1977) describes the Japanese as evasive, passive, restrictive, reserved, and non-persuasive. Nishiyama (1973) claims that verbal aggressiveness is not a Japanese virtue as children are trained from early childhood not to talk too much. They learn not to speak during meals, to strangers, and in public unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. The Japanese are concerned with "saving face," according to Nishiyama, and will do almost everything possible to avoid public embarrassment. Ueda (1974) notes that the Japanese people traditionally do not enjoy conversation or dialogue with other people. She thinks that the "attitudes of holding back one's ideas and feelings before others was so deeply implanted in the Japanese during the feudalistic reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate that it continued to a decade or so ago" (p. 39). Naruke's (1974) assessment is even stronger. The Japanese suffer from the phobia of meeting other people, he contends, and experience embarrassment in communicating with each other. Nakane (1970) believes that the Japanese culture hinders oral interaction and, as a whole, the Japanese are not sociable.

Reports such as those of Yoshikawa, Nishiyama, Ueda, Naruke and Nakane imply a people who may be apprehensive about speaking in certain circumstances. Shyness, self-consciousness, and embarrassment are

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characteristics of communication apprehension.

Yet Nishida (1977) observes that the Japanese can sit together quite comfortably without saying a word to each other. Ishikawa (1970) writes that 76% of the Japanese business people surveyed believe a "silent" man rather than an "eloquent" man will succeed in business in Japan. Over 65% of the women questioned in the same survey chose "silent" men over "eloquent" men as candidates for marriage. Ishikawa also reports that many Japanese who regard themselves as "eloquent" would prefer to be "silent." Yoshikawa (1977) believes this preoccupation with silence results from a basic mistrust among the Japanese of verbal messages and a preference for a non-discursive, aesthetic-oriented approach which stresses nonverbal feelings and attitudes.

The conclusions of Nishida, Ishikawa and Yoshikawa slightly contradict the belief that the Japanese are apprehensive. The Japanese may not be apprehensive at all. They may simply prefer silence in many social situations that in a Western culture would call for talk.

What is the situation? Are the Japanese apprehensive or aren't they? Are they shy, uncomfortable and embarrassed in speaking situations or are they orally non communicative because that is a cultural trait? The research reported here was undertaken to discover whether the Japanese do consider themselves apprehensive in certain speaking situations.

Communication apprehension, as the term is used here, means more than stage fright, the fear which often is associated with speaking to a large audience. Many people experience stage fright when faced with what they consider to be a threatening speaking situation such as giving a public speech. Communication apprehension is a more serious problem encountered

by a smaller percentage of people than those who suffer the symptoms of stage fright (Phillips, 1976; Sokoloff, 1976; Oerkvitz, 1976; McCroskey, 1976).

Those who are apprehensive in communication situations not only exhibit the stage fright behaviors normal to many public speakers, they fear to speak in almost all dyadic and small group situations as well. Their anxiety surpasses any gains they think they will achieve by talking, therefore, they either do not speak at all or avoid speaking unless they are obligated to do so. Forced to speak, they feel anxious, tense, uncomfortable, and embarrassed. Others see them as shy or reticent.

The highly apprehensive will respond negatively in any oral communication situation, real or anticipated, public or private, involving any number of people in small or large groups.

To discover whether the Japanese are apprehensive or merely non communicative in oral situations, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension for College Students (PRCA-College) (McCroskey, 1970) was administered to 700 Japanese students. This population consisted of 387 male and 313 female students representing four universities (Nihon, Waseda, Otsuma Women's, and the City University of Yokohama). A similar group of Americans also completed the PRCA-College for comparison purposes. The Americans were 727 University of Hawaii at Manoa students enrolled in speech and human development classes. After randomly discarding 27 responses, the 700 remaining American responses split between females and males.

The PRCA-College consists of twenty statements concerning feelings about communicating orally with other people. The items focus on dyadic

communication, small group communication and public communication, with a few items relating to all three communication contexts.

The items appear in a five-choice response format: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The student selects the response for each item which applies to him. Eleven of the items are positively worded and the remainder negatively worded. For scoring purposes, the items are converted so that all score in a 1 - 5 manner with 1 indicating least apprehension and 5 most apprehension. Those who score higher than 70 reflect highly apprehensive people as McCroskey (1970) testifies.

The PRCA-College instrument was developed in the United States, following a procedure typical of much test or scale construction. Specifically, a content domain, communication apprehension, was identified. Then an appropriate set of items representing the domain were sampled and tested for homogeneity, reliability and validity. The testing was done in the United States. It was not tested in Japan. Triandis (1972) argues that scales used outside the population in which they were developed could result in essentially uninterpretable results. The research reported here could be faulted for that reason.

Are the Japanese university students participating in the research apprehensive in oral communication situations? Table 1 indicates the scores for each PRCA-College items in percentages. The "+" column represents low apprehension, the "o" neutral response, and the "-" high apprehension for the items. As a group, the Japanese scored higher than average on 75% of the items.

TABLE 1

% Distribution of PRCA-College Item Scores for Japanese University Students

Items	+	o	-
1	22%	31%	47%*
2	19	18	63 *
3	10	30	60 *
4	5	30	65 *
5	16	34	50 *
6	40	33	27
7	42	33	25
8	21	27	52 *
9	28	32	40 *
10	22	43	35 *
11	17	47	36 *
12	29	35	36 *
13	28	35	37 *
14	35	37	28
15	39	36	25
16	33	47	20
17	23	46	31
18	14	25	61 *
19	13	28	59 *
20	10	12	69 *

* Indicates "higher than average" apprehension.

To confirm the group's apprehension, a t test was run and the results are shown in Table 2. The students composing the respondents perceive themselves as significantly more apprehensive than not. The generalizations in the literature concerning the apprehension of the Japanese seem to be supportable with the results of this research.

TABLE 2

Japanese University Students Perception

Of Their Oral Communication Apprehension

Variable	N	df	$\bar{X}$	t
Not Apprehensive	20	38	163	4.69**
Apprehensive	20	38	302	

** $p < .01$

A comparison of the Japanese respondents was made with a similar group of Americans and Table 3 shows a significant difference between the Japanese and Americans. The Japanese are more apprehensive than their American counterparts.

TABLE 3

Japanese And American PRCA-College Scores Compared

Variable	N	df	$\bar{X}$	t
Americans	20	38	429.6	1.75*
Japanese	20	38	457.3	

* $p < .05$

Another comparison merits consideration. How do the Japanese and Americans compare in the dyadic small group, and public speaking situations. The PRCA-College was constructed to measure apprehension in those three situations and Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate that the Japanese again are significantly more apprehensive than the Americans in all three types of speaking situations.

TABLE 4

Apprehension In Dyadic Speaking

Variable	N	df	$\bar{X}$	t
Japanese	8	14	174	2.863**
Americans	8	14	289.62	

** $p < .01$

TABLE 5

Apprehension In Small Group Speaking

Variable	N	df	$\bar{X}$	t
Japanese	9	16	193.22	2.673**
American	9	16	302.55	

** $p < .01$

TABLE 6

Apprehension In Public Speaking

Variable	N	df	$\bar{X}$	t
Japanese	13	24	157.61	2.48*
Americans	13	24	242.84	

*$p < .05$

The research results seem to support the belief shared by a number of scholars that the Japanese tend to be apprehensive in oral communication situations. Certainly, the largest portion of the Japanese who took the PRCA-College perceive themselves to be apprehensive if their responses are a true indication of their feeling.

The PRCA-College, however, is an American contrived instrument and concerns the values Americans attach to oral communication. These values are by no means identical to those of the Japanese. As Yoshikawa (1977) explains, there are many differences between the values the Japanese and Americans have about speech. Five of these distinctions demand attention since they may account for the apparently high apprehension level among the Japanese respondents. An explanation of the five follows.

1. A group versus individualistic orientation. The Japanese value harmony and will avoid opposing anyone directly. They are other-directed, in other words. Since the Japanese ordinarily encounter different people in different communication situations, to be other-directed and harmonious in each new situation, they may have to alter their ideas from situation to situation to conform to the ideas of the different people they meet. Talk

then tends to be situational.

Americans, on the other hand, are individualistically-oriented. They value openness, frankness, and a healthy confrontation of ideas regardless of the situation or the people they meet even though they may create disharmony and lose the support of others. Their individualness and independence is diametrically opposed to the Japanese's group-centeredness and need for harmony.

2. Aesthetic versus cognitive style of communicating. To the Japanese, the communicator's feelings or attitudes are crucial (the aesthetic style). To the Americans, the exchange of ideas or messages is foremost (the cognitive style). For the Japanese, it's a minimum of verbal messages and a maximum of nonverbal; for the Americans, it's a minimum of nonverbal messages and a maximum of verbal. The Japanese "read" feelings; the Americans listen to words.

3. Persuasive versus non-persuasive talk. The Japanese consider it poor policy to use language to persuade or to establish mutual understanding; the Americans consider it good policy. Thus the Japanese try to make themselves understood by not talking, the Americans by talking.

4. Total understanding versus no understanding. When a Japanese says there's no use in talking further, he means he cannot accept not only his fellow communicator's ideas, attitudes, and/or feelings but the other fellow as a total person. For the Japanese, it's total understanding or no understanding at all; it's an emotional oneness with the total personality of the other. Americans are not like that. They take a piece-meal approach realizing that it is not possible to understand the other totally. Feelings or attitudes, thoughts or ideas, actions or performances are evaluated separately.

Americans, thus, are more flexible and cooperative in oral interaction.

5. Direct versus non-directive talk. The Japanese are apt to be indirect in their communication, using intermediary symbols or persons to get their feelings or ideas across, while the Americans are up-front and direct.

The five differences probably account for a major part of the apprehension Japanese seem to have about oral communication. However, Yoshikawa's conclusions are based on a comparison of Japanese and American communication styles. The research reported here also stems from a similar comparison and, in addition, uses a Western-validated instrument. Yet, as the Japanese communicate among themselves, apprehension may not be an issue at all. Since culturally the Japanese do not consider excessive talk appropriate, apprehension may cause little concern.

Nevertheless the data has meaning and usefulness. To those Japanese or Americans intending to interact orally with the other culture, the data needs reflection. Japanese who expect to do business with Americans or who plan to study in America, for example, should anticipate a more orally aggressive interchange than they would experience while talking with their fellow citizens. Japanese studying in American universities should recognize that more will be expected of them orally in the classroom. On the other hand, Americans interacting with the Japanese should expect more silence and less oral aggressiveness in their dealings.

The data can have meaning also to those Japanese who have been labelled, "new, progressive, innovative, and anti-traditional,"--those Japanese who have struggled for self-hood, and independence and are self-assertive, critical-thinkers. Their mode of communication comes close to the American mode,

and, for them as for Americans, apprehension is a problem to confront.

In summary, this study specifically investigated the degree of communication apprehension among a group of Japanese university students and found them to hold a high degree of apprehension. The Japanese group then were compared with an American group of university students. The Americans proved to be less apprehensive than the Japanese in oral communication situations. The data's usefulness may be tempered, however, by the problems normally associated with cross-cultural research.

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